

SAMUEL KRAMER PAPERS, 1940-1942, 1974
2016.467.1

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW
Washington, DC 20024-2126
Tel. (202) 479-9717
e-mail: reference@ushmm.org

Descriptive summary

Title: Samuel Kramer papers

Dates: 1940-1942, 1974

Accession number: 2016.467.1

Creator: Kramer, Samuel.

Extent: 19 folders

Repository: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW,
Washington, DC 20024-2126

Abstract: Consists of correspondence, memoranda, notes, photographs and similar materials collected by Samuel Kramer, an attorney who was legal counsel to Agudas Chasidei Chabad in Brooklyn, NY, and who worked closely with Rabbi S. Gourary and his father-in-law, the Lubavticher Rebbe Joseph Isaac Schneerson, in attempts to secure visas for several dozen rabbis and students of the Tomchei Tmimim yeshiva, first so that they could leave Lithuania for Japan, and then from Japan onward, 1940-1941.

Languages: English

Administrative Information

Access: Collection is open for use, but is stored offsite. Please contact the Reference Desk more than seven days prior to visit in order to request access.

Reproduction and use: Collection is available for use. Material may be protected by copyright. Please contact reference staff for further information.

Preferred citation: (Identification of item), Samuel Kramer papers (2016.467.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC]

Acquisition information: Purchase, 2016.

Accruals: Accruals may have been received since this collection was first processed, see archives catalog at collections.ushmm.org for further information.

Processing history: Processed by Brad Bauer, March 2017.

Biographical note

Samuel Kramer was a New York-based attorney who served as legal counsel to Agudas Chasidei Chabad (A.C.C.) of the United States and Canada, which had its headquarters in Brooklyn, New York. The American branch of Agudas Chasidei Chabad was founded in 1924 by Kramer's father, Rabbi Moshe Eliezer (Morris L. Kramer), and after his death, his son Chaim Zalman (Hyman) became its president, and another son, Abraham, was its treasurer, and a business partner to his brother, Samuel. The law practice of Samuel Kramer was located on 122 E. 42nd Street in Manhattan, and although he belonged to another synagogue, the Jewish Center of Manhattan, he was known for his support of Chabad. Samuel Kramer was also a veteran who had served in the U.S. Navy during World War I, and had helped found the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA) and the Sons of Israel synagogue in Brooklyn.

With the outbreak of World War II, Samuel, having learned of the plight of the leader of Chabad, Rabbi Josef Isaac (Yosef Yitzhak) Schneersohn, who was trapped in German-occupied Poland, at the Lubavitch Yeshiva Tomchei Temimim in Otwock, near Warsaw, took action to try to secure his escape from Poland. Working with the U.S. State Department, and other intermediaries, as well as colleagues Max Rhoades and Philip Kleinfeld, he was ultimately successful, and through negotiations with German Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, then head of the Abwehr (military intelligence), was able to secure the granting of diplomatic immunity to Rabbi Schneersohn, and his release and transfer to Riga, Latvia, from which he travelled to Paris and arrived in New York in March 1940.

Later in 1940, Kramer was called into action again, this time to try to save the remaining rabbis and students who had been left behind in Otwock. Working with Rabbi Schneersohn's son-in-law, the Rabbi Shmaryahu (Samorious) Gourary, who had been with Rabbi Schneersohn in Poland and had served as head of Yeshiva Tomchei Temimim, he began contacting various political figures in New York, officials at the State Department, and the President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees (headed at that time by James G. McDonald), seeking visas that would enable the students and rabbis to immigrate to the United States. The students who had made it to Vilnius, Lithuania, were able to get transit visas to travel through the Soviet Union to China and Japan, where they waited for visas to travel to the United States. In early 1941, Kramer, Kleinfeld, and others, working with Gourary, set to work to obtain them, and although visas were granted to some of the students, these were later cancelled due to the "close relatives edict," which prevented refugees who had close relatives living under German occupation from entering the United States. While some of the students obtained visas to travel to Canada, the remainder waited in Japan until the end of World War II.

[Sources: Rigg, Bryan Mark, *The Rabbi Saved by Hitler's Soldiers* (University Press of Kansas, 2016); and *Out of the Inferno*, edited by Rachel Altein and Rabbi Eliezer Y. Zaklikovsky (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2002)].

Scope and content of collection

Consists of correspondence, memoranda, notes, photographs and similar materials collected by Samuel Kramer, an attorney who was legal counsel to Agudas Chasidei Chabad in Brooklyn, NY, and who worked closely with Rabbi S. Gourary and his father-in-law, the Lubavticher Rebbe Joseph Isaac Schneerson, in attempts to secure visas for several dozen rabbis and students of the Tomchei Tmimim yeshiva, first so that they could leave Lithuania for Japan, and then from Japan onward, 1940-1941.

The "Correspondence" series is the largest component of the collection, and consists primarily of letters from Kramer, Philip Kleinfeld, and others to various political leaders in New York, seeking support for their efforts to obtain visas and the means of bringing the yeshiva students to the United States. Those whose help was sought included Senator Robert Wagner, Congressman Sol Bloom, and New York state officials, including Lazarus Joseph (N.Y. State Senate) and Samuel Rosenman (Justice, N.Y. Supreme Court). There is also a file of correspondence addressed to the President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees, copies of letters of reference written to them from Senator David Walsh—who had been instrumental with the rescue of Rabbi Schneersohn—as well as Breckinridge Long of the State Department, both in reference to an employee of Agudas Chasidei Chabad, in preparation for a planned meeting in August 1940 with the committee and its head James G. McDonald. A file with a Cuba-based attorney, Max Fux, explored the possibility of bringing the students to Cuba, and Photostats of a letter and list sent to the U.S. Consulate in Yokohama, Japan, is also included, as well as correspondence with A.M. Warren of the Visa Division of the State Department. In addition, this series contains a congratulatory telegram sent by leaders of Agudas Chasidei Chabad, including Rabbi Schneersohn, to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, on the event of the latter's re-election as President in November 1940.

The series "Other" includes lists of rabbis and students, as well as memoranda, typically written by Kramer, or dictated to an assistant, after meetings or phone calls, to record the contents of those discussions. The photographs consist of two images of a meeting of Chabad (perhaps the same event). One of them, dated November 1942 at the bottoms, shows Kramer (seated at left, wiping his mouth), and Rabbi Schneersohn (fourth from left), at a table or dais. This series also contains part of the cover of the original folder in which these documents were filed, since it contains written information from Kramer or his staff that may be useful in reconstructing its provenance, as well as that of related material that is not extant (such as his files pertaining to the rescue of Rabbi Schneersohn from Poland).

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged in two series: I. Correspondence, II. Other, with files arranged in alphabetic order by folder title.

Indexing terms

Personal names:

Schneersohn, Joseph Isaac, 1880-1950.

Gourary, Samariou, 1897-1989.

Corporate headings:

Agudas Chassidei Chabad.

Chabad Lubavitch (Organization)

Topical headings:

Jewish refugees--Japan.

Jewish refugees--New York (State)--New York.
Hasidim.
World War, 1939-1945--Jews--Rescue--Japan.
World War, 1939-1945--Jews--Rescue--Lithuania.

CONTAINER LIST

Correspondence

- 1 Agudas Chasidei Chabad, November 1940
- 2 Bloom, Sol (U.S. House of Representatives), 1940-1941
- 3 Cullen, William (regarding Gen. John O'Ryan), May-June 1941
- 4 Fux, Max (regarding Cuban immigration), June 1941
Gourary, S.: letters from, sent to Samuel Kramer
- 5 1940
- 6 1941: April-May
- 7 1941: June-July
- 8 Gourary, S.: letters to, from Samuel Kramer, 1940-1941
- 9 Joseph, Lazarus (New York State Senate), July 1941
- 10 Kramer, Abe, 1941-1942
- 11 President's Advisory Council on Political Refugees, 1940-1941
- 12 Rosenman, Samuel (Justice, New York Supreme Court), April-May 1941
- 13 State Department, United States: Warren, A.M. (Chief, Visa Division), April-July 1941
- 14 State Department, United States: Consul, Yokohama, Japan, April 1941
- 15 Wagner, Robert (U.S. Senator), December 1940

Other

- 16 Folder cover, circa 1974
- 17 List of rabbis and students
- 18 Memoranda and notes, August 1940-June 1941
- 19 Photographs, 1942 (November), and undated